

December/January 2003 Kudos

A Gift from the Heart

By Leah Sandberg, Lassen-Modoc Unit

Several years ago, Jim Van Meter inherited two cemetery plots in Westwood, California from his parents. He didn't need the plots himself and often wondered what he should do with them. Somehow, the idea of selling the plots didn't sit well with Jim. It just didn't feel right. The events of September 11th hit close to home for Jim as a retired CDF Fire Captain. To Jim, the fire service has always had the strong ties of a family. Whether you know the firefighter personally or not, when one was killed, all felt the loss.

On August 28, 2002 three firefighters from the Lassen National Forest were killed when their engine went off the road. Jim felt the impact of this incident even closer to home. Of the three killed in the accident two were from Jim's hometown of Westwood.

Jim was driving home from Susanville shortly after the incident when a strong feeling overwhelmed him. It suddenly occurred to him what he should do with the gift given to him by his parents. He decided he would offer his cemetery plots to the families of the Lassen National Forest employees. Jim called Steve Peterson, Lassen-Modoc Unit Chief and asked how he could make this happen.

Steve Oustad was the Captain that was supervising the crew of Almanor Engine 11 when the tragedy occurred. He was a long time resident of Westwood and an active member of the community theater. Sadly, Steve Oustad was among those that were killed in the vehicle accident.

The Oustad family heard of Jim's generous offer and contacted him about his family plots. They wanted a place where they could keep Steve's ashes and build a monument in his honor. Jim was pleased to be able to offer his family's plot and began the paperwork to transfer the space to the Oustad family. Finally the decision of what to do with his parent's gift felt right. Sometimes it is frustrating to witness the hurt of others and not know how to help. But sometimes it's the simplest heartfelt gift that brings the joy and healing that we seek.

CDF's Forest Legacy Program

Dear Director Tuttle,

I recently attended the Land Trust Alliance annual rally in Austin, Texas. While there, I had the great fortune of meeting and visiting with Rick Cooksey, National Director of the Forest Legacy Program. During the course of my discussion with Rick, it became clear that I was remiss in showing my gratitude to Jeff Calvert, the California Forest Legacy Coordinator, for his role in the Howe Creek Ranch Conservation Easement.

Mr. Cooksey was not aware that my family's Howe Creek Ranch was under easement; In fact he was under the impression that the project had failed. I was delighted to tell him the news that our (the Hackett family, The Pacific Forest Trust, and the State of California) Howe Creek Ranch project was in fact complete and a great success!

The point that I would like to emphasize is that our project would not have happened without Forest Legacy, and specifically, I don't believe it would have happened without Jeff Calvert. I make this statement having had the experience of being significantly involved in the fund raising for the project; having drafted the funding proposals and hosted the various funding agencies, and worked directly with The Pacific Forest Trust to create legislative support. It was my observation that the tables turned for our fundraising effort on July 27, 2001, during a ranch tour with representatives from Forest Legacy, the Wildlife Conservation Board, and the Coastal Conservancy. On that tour, Mr. Calvert's enthusiasm, excitement and specific understanding of the public benefits inherent in the project's type of working landscape conservation, affected an optimism in those other agencies on that day that built the coalition that precipitated doing the deal.

I regret that PFT chose not to accept Forest legacy money. Since meeting with Mr. Cooksey, I fear that PFT's decision may have been damaging to California's credibility in the Forest Legacy Program. I would have preferred to have followed through with Forest Legacy, as I told PFT back in February. Regardless of how it turned out it should be known that Forest Legacy was instrumental in facilitating the Howe Creek Ranch Conservation Easement. Further, I believe that California Forest Legacy stands as the best suited vehicle for accomplishing working forestland conservation in the State.

We were hoping to have an easement celebration picnic on the ranch, but since the close of escrow in late August, operational responsibilities and the materialization of new conservation project requests have overwhelmed my wife and me. We still intend to have that picnic, however and I hope that we can schedule it when you are in Humboldt County so that you and Mr. Tuttle can attend.

Steve Hackett
Howe Creek Ranch

Pacific and Airport Incidents

Dear Director Tuttle:

On behalf of the men and women of the Los Angeles County Fire Department, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to you and all the members of your agency for your hard work here in Los Angeles County. On both the Pacific Incident in Malibu, and the Airport Incident on Catalina Island, the performance of the employees of the California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection was exemplary.

Through your dedication and support, both injuries and property loss related to this incident were kept to a minimum.

Your Support and assistance were invaluable and demonstrates the strong relationship between public agencies when confronted with a major disaster.

Thank you for your untiring efforts.

Very truly yours,
Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman
County of Los Angeles Fire Department

CDF's Archaeology Office

Dear Dan, (Dan Foster, Senior State Archeologist)

Thank you very much for being a great instructor and putting together the wonderful CDF archeology course (#80) last summer. I learned much and it sparked enthusiasm and interest in a favorite subject of mine. After our field day at the Church Rock site and before we returned to Santa Cruz the next day, I took my wife, Nancy, and her camera for a visit. We discovered yet another petroglyph that no one saw the day before. We were there early in the morning, so the light was just right. We also got to see one of the local inhabitants as its picture shows.

Again, thank you very much and if Nancy's busy schedule permits, she would like to take the course next summer. I would love to volunteer for field work to help your effort if this is possible. Even though my background is Physics and Astronomy, maybe I could offer some technical expertise. Please let me know. Happy Holidays to you and your family.

Sincerely,
Bill Brown

Forestry Institute for Teachers (FIT)

By Josh Hubbard, Staff Writer, Communiqué

Every year the Northern California Society of American Foresters (Nor Cal S.A.F.) puts on three training sessions, one in Shasta, Humboldt, and Plumas counties. These sessions, known as the Forestry Institute for Teachers (FIT), is a very valuable learning experience that trains kindergarten through 12th grade teachers through a six day, hands on field workshop that provides the teachers with knowledge, skills, and tools to teach students about the importance of forest ecology and resource management. Instruction is provided by natural resource professionals who volunteer their time to present an overview of forest sciences as well as discussing environmental issues.

FIT endeavors to provide a balanced, scientific based educational process that is vital to understanding how decisions are made about management of forests and natural resources upon which humans depend. Environmental education that is integrated into a students education can help kids learn how to make choices regarding issues such as forest health, ecosystem management, consumerism, and local economies. These educational specialists assist the teachers participating by establishing a working curriculum that offers a broad range of experiences to understand the topics and enhance their training.

Recently the Northern California Society of American Foresters sent a thank you to CDF for the generous support and assistance that has been provided over the years. It is this support that plays a key role in enabling this training program to develop and prosper while reaching the younger generation with importance of forest management.